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"Songs of Innocence and of Experience: Infant Joy" by William Blake (British, London 1757–1827 London) via The Metropolitan Museum of Art is licensed under CC0 1.0

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THE COMMUNITY MASQUE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR WAR

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Of All Things*, by Robert C. Benchley

With War and Licker removed from the list of "What's Going on This Week," how will mankind spend the long summer evenings? Some advocate another war. Others recommend a piece of yeast in a glass of grape-juice. The effect is said to be equally devastating.

But there is a new school, led by Percy Mackaye, which brings forward a scheme for occupying the spare time of the world which has, at least, the savor of novelty. It presents the community masque as a substitute for war. Whenever a neighborhood, or county, feels the old craving for blood-letting and gas-bombing coming on, a town meeting is to be called and plans drawn up for the presentation of a masque entitled "Democracy" or "From Chrysalis to Butterfly." In this simple way, one and all will be kept out in the open air and will get to know each other better, thus relieving their bellicose cravings right there on the village green among themselves, without dragging a foreign nation into the mess at all. The slogan is "Fight Your Neighbors First. Why Go Abroad for War?"

The community masque idea is all right in itself. There certainly can be no harm in dressing up to represent the Three Platoon System, or the Spirit of Machinery, and reciting free verse to the effect that:

"I am the Three Platoon System. Firemen I represent,
And the clash and clang of the Hook and Ladder Company."

No one could find fault with that, provided that those taking part in the thing do so of their own free will and understand what they are doing.

The trouble with the community masque is not so much with the masque as with the community. For while the masque may be a five star sporting extra hot from the presses of Percy Mackaye, the community is the same old community that has been getting together for inter-Sunday School track-meets and Wig and Footlight Club Amateur Theatricals for years and years, and the result has always been the same.

Let us say, for instance, that the community of Wimbleshurst begins to feel the lack of a good, rousing war to keep the Ladies' Guild and the men over thirty-five busy. What could be more natural than to call in Mr. Mackaye, and say: "What have you got in the way of a nice masque for a suburban district containing many socially possible people and others who might do very well in ensemble work?"

Something entitled "The March of Civilization" is selected, because it calls for Boy Scout uniforms and a Goddess of Liberty costume, all of which are on hand, together with lots of Red Cross regalia, left over from the war drives. The plot of the thing concerns the adventures of the young girl _Civilization_ who leaves her home in the _Neolithic Period_ accompanied only by her faithful old nurse _Language_ and _Language's_ little children the _Vowels_ and the _Consonants_. She is followed all the way from the Neolithic Age to the Present Time by the evil spirit, _Indigestion_, but, thanks to the helpful offices of the _Spirits of Capillary Attraction_, and _Indestructibility of Matter_, she overcomes all obstacles and reaches her goal, _The League of Nations_, at last.

But during the course of her wanderings, there have been all kinds of sub-plots which bring the element of suspense into the thing. For instance, it seems that this person _Indigestion_ has found out something about _Civilization's_ father which gives him the upper hand over the girl, and he, together with the two gunmen, _Heat_ and _Humidity_, arrange all kinds of traps for the poor thing to fall into. But she takes counsel with the kind old lady, _Self-Determination of Peoples_, and is considerably helped by the low comedy character, _Obesity_, who always appears at just the right moment. So in the end, there is a big ensemble, involving Boy Scouts, representatives of those Allies who happen to be in good standing in that particular month, seven boys and girls personifying the twelve months of the year, Red Cross workers, the Mayor's Committee of Welcome, a selection of Major Prophets, children typifying the ten different ways of cooking an egg, and the all-pervading _Spirit of the Post-Office Department_, seated on a dais in the rear and watching over the assemblage with kindly eyes and an armful of bricks.

This, then, is in brief outline, "The March of Civilization," selected for presentation by the Community Council of Wimblehurst. It is to be done on the edge of the woods which line the golf-course, and on paper, the thing shapes up rather well.

Considerable hard feeling arises, however, over the choice of the children to play the parts of the _Vowels_ and the _Consonants_. It is, of course, not possible to have all the vowels and consonants represented, as they would clutter up the stage and might prove unwieldy in the allegretto passages. A compromise is therefore effected by personifying only the more graceful ones, like _S_ and the lower-case _f_, and this means that a certain discrimination must be used in selecting the actors. It also means that a great many little girls are going to be disappointed and their mothers' feelings outraged.

Little Alice Withstanley is chosen to play the part of the _Craft Guild Movement in Industry_, showing the rise of coöperation and unity among the working-classes. She is chosen because she has blonde hair which can be arranged in braids down her back, obviously essential to a proper representation of industrial team-work as a moving force in the world's progress. It so happens, however, that the daughter of the man who is cast for _Humidity_ has had her eyes on this ingénue part ever since the printed text was circulated and had virtually been promised it by the Head of the House Committee of the Country Club, through whose kindness the grounds were to be used for the performance. There is a heated discussion over the merits of the two contestants between Mrs. Withstanley and the mother of the betrayed girl, which results in the withdrawal of the latter's offer to furnish Turkish rugs for the Oriental Decadence scene.

[Illustration: "There is a heated discussion between Mrs. Withstanley and the mother of the betrayed girl."]

Following this, the rougher element of the community--enlisted to take part in the scenes showing the building of the Pyramids and the first Battle of Bull Run--appear at one of the early rehearsals in a state of bolshevik upheaval, protesting against the unjust ruling which makes them attend all rehearsals and wait around on the side hill until their scenes are on, keeping them inactive sometimes from two to three hours, according to the finish with which the principals get through the prologue and opening scenes showing the Creation. The proletariat present an ultimatum, saying that the Committee in charge can either shorten their waiting hours or remove the restrictions on crap-shooting on the side-hill during their periods of inaction.

There is a meeting of the Director and his assistants who elect a delegation to confer with the striking legionaries, with the result that no compromise is reached, the soviet withdraws from the masque in a body, threatening to set fire to the grass on the first night of the performance.

During the rehearsals the husband of the woman who is portraying _Winter Wheat_ is found wandering along the brookside with her sister cereal _Spring Wheat_, which, of course, makes further polite coöperation between these two staples impossible, and the Dance of the Food Stuffs has to be abandoned at the last moment. This adds to the general tension.

Three nights before the first performance the Director calls every one to a meeting in the trophy room of the Club-house and says that, so far as he is concerned, the show is off. He has given up his time to

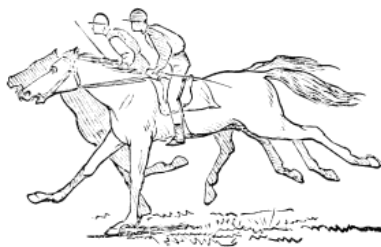
come out here, night after night, in an attempt to put on a masque that will be a credit to the community and a significant event in the world of art, and what has he found? Indifference, irresponsibility, lack of coöperation, non-attendance at rehearsals, and a spirit of laissez-faire in the face of which it is impossible to produce a successful masque. Consideration for his own reputation, as well as that of the township, makes it necessary for him to throw the whole thing over, here and now.

[Illustration: "The audience is composed chiefly of the aged and the infirm."]

The Chairman of the Committee then gets up and cries a little, and says that he is sure that if every one agrees to pull together during these last three days and to attend rehearsals faithfully and to try to get plenty of sleep, Mr. Parsleigh, the coach, will consent to help them through with the performance, and he asks every one who is willing to coöperate to say "Aye." Every one says "Aye" and Mr. Parsleigh is won over.

As for the masque itself, it is given, of course; and as most of the able-bodied people of the community are taking part, the audience is composed chiefly of the aged and the infirm, who catch muscular rheumatism from sitting out-of-doors and are greatly bored, except during those scenes when their relatives are taking part. The masque is hailed as a great success, however, in spite of the fact that the community has been disrupted and social life made impossible until the next generation grows up and agrees to let bygones be bygones.

But as a substitute for war, it has no equal.



SONG FROM “TWELFTH NIGHT”

O mistress mine! where are you roaming?
O! stay and hear; your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low:
Trip no further, pretty sweetening;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'tis not hereafter:
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

William Shakespeare.

THE TIME I'VE LOST IN WOOING

The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light that lies
In woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing.
Tho' wisdom oft has sought me,
I scorn'd the lore she brought me,
My only books
Were woman's looks,
And folly's all they taught me.

Her smile when Beauty granted,
I hung with gaze enchanted,
Like him the sprite
Whom maids by night
Oft meet in glen that's haunted.
Like him, too, Beauty won me;
But when the spell was on me,
If once their ray
Was turn'd away,
O! winds could not outrun me.

And are those follies going?

And is my proud heart growing
Too cold or wise
For brilliant eyes
Again to set it glowing?
No—vain, alas! th' endeavor
From bonds so sweet to sever;—
Poor Wisdom's chance
Against a glance
Is now as weak as ever.
Thomas Moore.

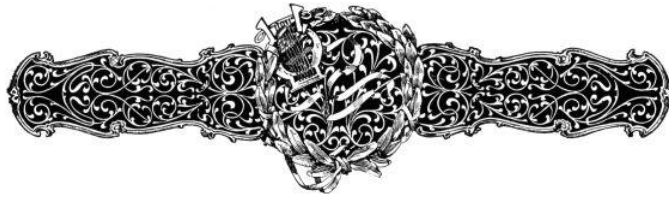
HOW LIKE A WOMAN

I wanted you to come to-day—
Or so I told you in my letter—
And yet, if you had stayed away,
I should have liked you so much better.
I should have sipped my tea unseen,
And thrilled at every door-bell's pealing,
And thought how nice I could have been
Had you evinced a little feeling.

I should have guessed you drinking tea
With someone whom you loved to madness;
I should have thought you cold to me,
And revelled in a depth of sadness.
But, no! you came without delay—
I could not feel myself neglected:
You said the things you always say,
In ways not wholly unexpected.

If you had let me wait in vain,
We should, in my imagination,
Have held, what we did not attain,
A most dramatic conversation.
Had you not come, I should have known
At least a vague anticipation,
Instead of which, I grieve to own,
You did not give me one sensation.
Caroline and Alice Duer.

All from: The Project Gutenberg EBook of *A Vers de Société Anthology*, by Various



THE MAIDEN'S DREAM.

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Violets and Other Tales*, by Alice Ruth Moore

The maid had been reading love-poetry, where the world lay bathed in moon-light, fragrant with dew-wet roses and jasmine, harmonious with the clear tinkle of mandolin and guitar. Then a lethargy, like unto that which steeps the senses, and benumbs the faculties of the lotus-eaters, enveloped her brain, and she lay as one in a trance,--awake, yet sleeping; conscious, yet unburdened with care.

And there stole into her consciousness, words, thoughts, not of her own, yet she read them not, nor heard them spoken; they fell deep into her heart and soul, softer and more caressing than the over-shadowing wing of a mother-dove, sweeter and more thrilling than the last high notes of a violin, and they were these:--

Love, most potent, most tyrannical, and most gentle of the passions which sway the human mind, thou art the invisible agency which rules mens' souls, which governs mens' kingdoms, which controls the universe. By thy mighty will do the silent, eternal hosts of Heaven sweep in sublime procession across the unmeasured blue. The perfect harmony of the spheres is attuned for thee, and by thee; the perfect coloring of the clouds, than which no mortal pigment can dare equal, are thy handiwork. Most ancient of the heathen deities, Eros; powerful God of the Christians, Jehovah, all hail! For a brief possession of thy divine fire have kingdoms waxed and waned; men in all the bitterness of hatred fought, bled, died by millions, their grosser selves to be swept into the bosom of their ancient mother, an immense holocaust to thee. For thee and thee alone does the world prosper, for thee do men strive to become better than their fellow-men; for thee, and through thee have they sunk to such depths of degradation as causes a blush to be painted upon the faces of those that see. All things are subservient to thee. All the delicate intricate workings of that marvellous machine, the human brain; all the passions and desires of the human heart,--ambition, desire, greed, hatred, envy, jealousy, all others. Thou breedst them all, O love, thou art all-potent, all-wise, infinite, eternal! Thy power is felt by mortals in all ages, all climes, all conditions. Behold!

A picture came into the maiden's eye: a broad and fertile plain, tender

verdure, soft blue sky overhead, with white billowy clouds nearing the horizon like great airy, snow-capped mountains. The soft warm breeze from the south whispered faintly through the tall, slender palms and sent a thrill of joy through the frisky lambkins, who capered by the sides of their graver dams. And there among the riches of the flock stood Laban, haughty, stern, yet withal a kindly gleam in the glance which rested upon the group about him. Hoary the beard that rested upon his breast, but steady the hand that stretched in blessing. Leah, the tender-eyed, the slighted, is there; and Rachel, young and beautiful and blushing beneath the ardent gaze of her handsome lover. "And Jacob loved Rachel, and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter."

How different the next scene! Heaven's wrath burst loose upon a single community. Fire, the red-winged demon with brazen throat wide opened, hangs his brooding wings upon an erstwhile happy city. Hades has climbed through the crater of Vesuvius, and leaps in fiendish waves along the land. Few the souls escaping, and God have mercy upon those who stumble through the blinding darkness, made more torturingly hideous by the intermittent flashes of lurid light. And yet there come three, whom the darkness seems not to deter, nor obstacles impede. Only a blind person, accustomed to constant darkness, and familiarized with these streets could walk that way. Nearer they come, a burst of flames thrown into the inky firmament by impish hands, reveals Glaucus, supporting the half-fainting Ione, following Nydia, frail, blind, flower-loving Nydia, sacrificing life for her unloving beloved.

And then the burning southern sun shone bright and golden o'er the silken sails of the Nile serpent's ships; glinted on the armor and weapons of the famous galley; shone with a warm caressing touch upon her beauty, as though it loved this queen, as powerful in her sphere as he in his. It is at Actium, and the fate of nations and generations yet unborn hang, as the sword of Damocles hung, upon the tiny thread of destiny. Egypt herself, her splendid barbaric beauty acting like an inspiration upon the craven followers, leads on, foremost in this fierce struggle. Then, the tide turns, and overpowered, they fly before disgrace and defeat. Antony is there, the traitor, dishonored, false to his country, yet true to his love; Antony, whom ambition could not lure from her passionate caresses; Antony, murmuring softly,--

Egypt, thou knowest too well
My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings,
And thou should'st tow me after.
Over my spirit
Thy full supremacy thou knewest,
And that thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
Command me.

Picture after picture flashed through the maiden's mind. Agnes, the gentle, sacrificing, burrowing like some frantic animal through the ruins of Lisbon, saving her lover, Franklin, by teeth and bleeding hands. Dora, the patient, serving a loveless existence, saving her rival from starvation and destitution. The stern, dark, exiled Florentine poet, with that one silver ray in his clouded life--Beatrice.

She heard the piping of an elfish voice, "Mother, why does the minister keep his hands over his heart?" and the white drawn face of Hester Prynne, with her scarlet elf-child, passed slowly across her vision. The wretched misery of deluded Lucius and his mysterious Lamia she saw, and watched with breathless interest the formation of that "Brotherhood of the Rose." There was radiant Armored, from sea-blown, wave-washed Lyonesse, her perfect head poised in loving caress over the magic violin. Dark-eyed Corinne, head drooped gently as she improvised those Rome-famed world symphonies passed, almost ere Edna and St. Elmo had crossed the threshold of the church happy in the love now consecrated through her to God. Oh, the pictures, the forms, the love-words which crowded her mind! They thrilled her heart, crushed out all else save a crushing, over-powering sense of perfect, complete joy. A joy that sought to express itself in wondrous melodies and silences, filled with thoughts too deep and sacred for words. Overpowered with the magnificence of his reign, overwhelmed with the complete subjugation of all things unto him, do you wonder that she awoke and placing both hands into those of the lover at her side, whispered:--

Take all of me--I am thine own, heart, soul,
Brain, body, all; all that I am or dream
Is thine forever; yea, though space should teem
With thy conditions, I'd fulfil the whole,
Were to fulfil them to be loved by thee.



DOORSTEP

By Keith Laumer

[Transcriber's Note: This Project Gutenberg etext was produced from Galaxy Magazine February 1961. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]

*The general was bucking for his
other star--and this miserable
contraption bucked right back!*

Steadying his elbow on the kitchen table serving as desk, Brigadier General Straut leveled his binoculars and stared out through the second-floor window of the farmhouse at the bulky object lying canted at the edge of the wood lot. He watched the figures moving over and around the gray mass, then flipped the lever on the field telephone at his elbow.

"How are your boys doing, Major?"

"General, since that box this morning--"

"I know all about the box, Bill. So does Washington by now. What have you got that's new?"

"Sir, I haven't got anything to report yet. I have four crews on it, and she still looks impervious as hell."

"Still getting the sounds from inside?"

"Intermittently, General."

"I'm giving you one more hour, Major. I want that thing cracked."

The general dropped the phone back on its cradle and peeled the cellophane from a cigar absently. He had moved fast, he reflected, after the State Police notified him at nine forty-one last night. He had his men on the spot, the area evacuated of civilians, and a preliminary report on its way to Washington by midnight. At two

thirty-six, they had discovered the four-inch cube lying on the ground fifteen feet from the huge object--missile, capsule, bomb--whatever it was. But now--several hours later--nothing new.

The field phone jangled. Straut grabbed it up.

"General, we've discovered a thin spot up on the top side. All we can tell so far is that the wall thickness falls off there...."

"All right. Keep after it, Bill."

This was more like it. If Brigadier General Straut could have this thing wrapped up by the time Washington awoke to the fact that it was something big--well, he'd been waiting a long time for that second star. This was his chance, and he would damn well make the most of it.

* * * * *

He looked across the field at the thing. It was half in and half out of the woods, flat-sided, round-ended, featureless. Maybe he should go over and give it a closer look personally. He might spot something the others were missing. It might blow them all to kingdom come any second; but what the hell, he had earned his star on sheer guts in Normandy. He still had 'em.

He keyed the phone. "I'm coming down, Bill," he told the Major. On impulse, he strapped a pistol belt on. Not much use against a house-sized bomb, but the heft of it felt good.

The thing looked bigger than ever as the jeep approached it, bumping across the muck of the freshly plowed field. From here he could see a faint line running around, just below the juncture of side and top. Major Greer hadn't mentioned that. The line was quite obvious; in fact, it was more of a crack.

With a sound like a baseball smacking the catcher's glove, the crack opened, the upper half tilted, men sliding--then impossibly it stood open, vibrating, like the roof of a house suddenly lifted. The driver gunned the jeep. There were cries, and a ragged shrilling that set Straut's teeth on edge. The men were running back now, two of them dragging a third.

Major Greer emerged from behind the object, looked about, ran toward General Straut shouting. "... a man dead. It snapped; we weren't expecting it...."

Straut jumped out beside the men, who had stopped now and were looking

back. The underside of the gaping lid was an iridescent black. The shrill noise sounded thinly across the field. Greer arrived, panting.

"What happened?" Straut snapped.

"I was ... checking over that thin spot, General. The first thing I knew it was ... coming up under me. I fell; Tate was at the other side. He held on and it snapped him loose, against a tree. His skull--"

"What the devil's that racket?"

"That's the sound we were getting from inside before, General. There's something in there, alive--"

"All right, pull yourself together, Major. We're not unprepared. Bring your half-tracks into position. The tanks will be here soon."

Straut glanced at the men standing about. He would show them what leadership meant.

"You men keep back," he said. He puffed his cigar calmly as he walked toward the looming object. The noise stopped suddenly; that was a relief. There was a faint and curious odor in the air, something like chlorine ... or seaweed ... or iodine.

There were no marks in the ground surrounding the thing. It had apparently dropped straight in to its present position. It was heavy, too--the soft soil was displaced in a mound a foot high all along the side.

Behind him, Straut heard a yell. He whirled. The men were pointing; the jeep started up, churned toward him, wheels spinning. He looked up. Over the edge of the gray wall, six feet above his head, a great reddish limb, like the claw of a crab, moved, groping.

Straut yanked the .45 from its holster, jacked the action and fired. Soft matter splattered, and the claw jerked back. The screeching started up again angrily, then was drowned in the engine roar as the jeep slid to a stop.

Straut stooped, grabbed up a leaf to which a quivering lump adhered, jumped into the vehicle as it leaped forward; then a shock and they were going into a spin and....

* * * * *

"Lucky it was soft ground," somebody said. And somebody else asked,

"What about the driver?"

Silence. Straut opened his eyes. "What ... about...."

A stranger was looking down at him, an ordinary-looking fellow of about thirty-five.

"Easy, now, General Straut. You've had a bad spill. Everything is all right. I'm Professor Lieberman, from the University."

"The driver," Straut said with an effort.

"He was killed when the jeep went over."

"Went ... over?"

"The creature lashed out with a member resembling a scorpion's stinger. It struck the jeep and flipped it. You were thrown clear. The driver jumped and the jeep rolled on him."

Straut pushed himself up.

"Where's Greer?"

"I'm right here, sir." Major Greer stepped up, stood attentively.

"Those tanks here yet?"

"No, sir. I had a call from General Margrave; there's some sort of holdup. Something about not destroying scientific material. I did get the mortars over from the base."

Straut got to his feet. The stranger took his arm. "You ought to lie down, General--"

"Who the hell is going to make me? Greer, get those mortars in place, spaced between your tracks."

The telephone rang. Straut seized it. "General Straut."

"General Margrave here, Straut. I'm glad you're back on your feet. There'll be some scientists from the State University coming over. Cooperate with them. You're going to have to hold things together at least until I can get another man in there to--"

"Another man? General Margrave, I'm not incapacitated. The situation is under complete control--"

"It is, is it? I understand you've got still another casualty. What's happened to your defensive capabilities?"

"That was an accident, sir. The jeep--"

"We'll review that matter at a later date. What I'm calling about is more important right now. The code men have made some headway on that box of yours. It's putting out a sort of transmission."

"What kind, sir?"

"Half the message--it's only twenty seconds long, repeated--is in English. It's a fragment of a recording from a daytime radio program; one of the network men here identified it. The rest is gibberish. They're still working over it."

"What--"

"Bryant tells me he thinks there may be some sort of correspondence between the two parts of the message. I wouldn't know, myself. In my opinion, it's a threat of some sort."

"I agree, General. An ultimatum."

"Right. Keep your men back at a safe distance from now on. I want no more casualties."

* * * * *

Straut cursed his luck as he hung up the phone. Margrave was ready to relieve him, after he had exercised every precaution. He had to do something fast, before this opportunity for promotion slipped out of his hands.

He looked at Major Greer. "I'm neutralizing this thing once and for all. There'll be no more men killed."

Lieberman stood up. "General! I must protest any attack against this--"

Straut whirled. "I'm handling this, Professor. I don't know who let you in here or why--but I'll make the decisions. I'm stopping this man-killer before it comes out of its nest, maybe gets into that village beyond the woods. There are four thousand civilians there. It's my job to protect them." He jerked his head at Greer, strode out of the room.

Lieberman followed, pleading. "The creature has shown no signs of aggressiveness, General Straut--"

"With two men dead?"

"You should have kept them back--"

"Oh, it was my fault, was it?" Straut stared at Lieberman with cold fury. This civilian pushed his way in here, then had the infernal gall to accuse him, Brigadier General Straut, of causing the death of his own men. If he had the fellow in uniform for five minutes....

"You're not well, General. That fall--"

"Keep out of my way, Professor," Straut said. He turned and went on down the stairs. The present foul-up could ruin his career; and now this egghead interference....

With Greer at his side, Straut moved out to the edge of the field.

"All right, Major. Open up with your .50 calibers."

Greer called a command and a staccato rattle started up. The smell of cordite and the blue haze of gunsmoke--this was more like it. He was in command here.

Lieberman came up to Straut. "General, I appeal to you in the name of science. Hold off a little longer; at least until we learn what the message is about."

"Get back from the firing line, Professor." Straut turned his back on the civilian, raised the glasses to observe the effect of the recoilless rifle. There was a tremendous smack of displaced air, and a thunderous boom as the explosive shell struck. Straut saw the gray shape jump, the raised lid waver. Dust rose from about it. There was no other effect.

"Keep firing, Greer," Straut snapped, almost with a feeling of triumph. The thing was impervious to artillery; now who was going to say it was no threat?

"How about the mortars, sir?" Greer said. "We can drop a few rounds right inside it."

"All right, try that before the lid drops."

And what we'll try next, I don't know, he thought.

* * * * *

The mortar fired with a muffled thud. Straut watched tensely. Five seconds later, the object erupted in a gout of pale pink debris. The lid rocked, pinkish fluid running down its opalescent surface. A second burst, and a third. A great fragment of the menacing claw hung from the branch of a tree a hundred feet from the ship.

Straut grabbed up the phone. "Cease fire!"

Lieberman stared in horror at the carnage.

The telephone rang. Straut picked it up.

"General Straut," he said. His voice was firm. He had put an end to the threat.

"Straut, we've broken the message," General Margrave said excitedly. "It's the damnedest thing I ever...."

Straut wanted to interrupt, announce his victory, but Margrave was droning on.

"... strange sort of reasoning, but there was a certain analogy. In any event, I'm assured the translation is accurate. Here's how it reads in English...."

Straut listened. Then he carefully placed the receiver back on the hook.

Lieberman stared at him.

"What did it say?"

Straut cleared his throat. He turned and looked at Lieberman for a long moment before answering.

"It said, 'Please take good care of my little girl.'"



